

Commissioner handbook



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17-19 Buckingham Palace Road
London SW1W 0PT

Email: info@girlguiding.org.uk

Website: www.girlguiding.org.uk

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Project Coordinator: Natalie Ruszel

Editor: Helen Mortimer

Designer: Helen Davis

Production: Wendy Reynolds

Task and Finish Group: Elaine Clare, Val Elliot, Helen Humphreys, Jenny Patterson (chair), Teresa Skinner, Racheal Tattum, Emma Weston and Elaine Wilson.

Users are reminded that during the lifespan of this publication there may be changes to:

- Girlguiding's policy
- legal requirements
- practice by governing bodies, for example The Charity Commission
- British Standards

which will affect the accuracy of the information contained within these pages.

Although the terms 'parent' and 'daughter' are used in this resource, users should remember that what is said may apply to a carer or other adult with parental responsibility, or their ward.



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Foreword from the chief guide



Your new adventure starts here...

Thank you for taking on a volunteer role as a commissioner, and for all the commitment you will give to this over the next few years.

As part of being a commissioner, you will have a fantastic opportunity to grow guiding within your community and, allow more girls and young women to access all the amazing experiences our organisation has to offer.

This handbook has been designed to be a source of ideas as well as help. I would encourage you to read through it at the start but keep it handy as a point of reference whenever you may need it. There are so many people around you - from teams of volunteers and staff - who want to make sure you enjoy being a commissioner and will provide any help you may require. Being commissioner, I hope, will be a lifelong memory of an amazing time in guiding. You will be doing your best to provide fabulous opportunities to both our fantastic adult volunteers and our girls and young women.

Thank you so much for taking on this role. Through your help and volunteering we can help every girl and young woman know they can do and achieve anything.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tracy Foster". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tracy Foster, Chief Guide





Introduction

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Being a commissioner is both worthwhile and rewarding. As a commissioner you have the vital role of leading and making an impact in your district or division. You support local teams and inspire leaders to deliver good guiding, build and grow guiding in your area, and keep the district or division in shape to enable the adult volunteers to give all girls and young women the best possible guiding experience.

This resource aims to act as a ‘how-to’ guide for new commissioners, as well as a useful reference in important areas of commissioner work. The resource can therefore be used for guidance throughout your term as commissioner. It will point you towards other useful information and guiding resources, which can be found on the Girlguiding website or be purchased from the Girlguiding shop.

It will also touch on how to manage the job, through delegation and time management. Commissioners are not expected to do everything by themselves!

Having read this handbook you may feel that you have taken on a huge amount of work, information and responsibility in agreeing to become a commissioner. However, it is possible to manage it by using the tips and points in the section on Managing your time (page 31), by building a good team around you and by never being afraid to ask for help.

The role of commissioner is not only essential to guiding in your area, it is a great opportunity to help to ensure that guiding continues to be fun for the girls, the leaders and for you. Thank you for agreeing to take on this role.

Defining the role of commissioner

The role of commissioner covers a broad range of areas and can vary depending on the size and structure of your district or division. The majority of tasks you will carry out, delegate and oversee fall under one of the following headings.

- Leadership - leading adults at local level to deliver good guiding.
- Processes and resources - processes and information you have to help you deliver and support good local guiding.
- Vision - understanding and finding ways to deliver the aims and objectives of Girlguiding at national, region, county, and local levels.

Your mentor

In order to give you extra support in your new role, you will be assigned a mentor. This person will be someone with knowledge of the commissioner role who will be able to help you understand and work with you as you take on the role. You will be given the opportunity to meet them regularly and discuss any queries or concerns you may have. If you do not know who your mentor is then contact your county commissioner.

Your mentor will be with you in your first six months as a commissioner designate (see below), but it is likely you will remain in contact with them throughout your role.

Your mentor will help you to create an action plan, focusing on what you need to do to understand the role based on your day-to-day responsibilities. Their support is there to help you to become confident, competent and effective, assisting you in fulfilling the role to the best of your abilities.

You may be asked to begin your role before your predecessor finishes. This is a great opportunity to learn from the person already carrying out the role. Shadow the commissioner in her role, attend meetings with her, and get a sense of how the district or division is run.

Designate role

Your role as a commissioner designate will begin once you have had an initial meeting with your county commissioner or her appointed representative. You will hold the designate role over a period of six months, allowing you to experience the role and work with support from your mentor. At the end of your six months you will have another meeting with your county commissioner or appointed representative. This meeting will be held to discuss and agree openly that you should continue for the remainder of your role.

Once you have had this meeting and confirmed the role, your role on your GO record will be updated from commissioner designate to commissioner. You will then make your Promise, if you have yet to do so as an adult.



Chapter 1 Leadership

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As commissioner you are effectively a manager of the volunteers in your district or division. This team could range from a small number of people to a considerable number with varying roles. Together you will make up the district or division team.

Your district or division team will expect you to:

- provide support and advice when needed
- contact them regularly
- be contactable
- keep them up to date with important information and new ways of working
- hold regular meetings
- visit units
- ensure that the GO database is kept up to date
- ensure that everyone delivers good guiding in a safe way.

Whether you do all these tasks yourself or you delegate them to someone else, as commissioner you will need to ensure that all of them are carried out. Your district or division team is there to support you, so use the skills and experience the team brings.

Who is in your team?

Your team is made up of the volunteers in your area. Depending on your area, this will be the volunteers who run units, or the volunteers who support districts. These people have a range of different skills and backgrounds and it is important for you to think about the skills you require when recruiting new team members.

The table below gives an overview of some of the different roles within the guiding team and the skills required for these roles. districts and divisions are not all the same - the structure of your county will determine what roles make up your team. Depending

ROLE	DESCRIPTION	SKILLS
Assistant division commissioner/ District assistants	Assistant division commissioners and district assistants can assist and support the commissioner with most tasks. They are unable to give authorisation instead of a commissioner. (see page 34).	Good communication skills. Good team-working skills.
Administrators	Administrators provide administrative support for the district team, such as helping with research, minute-taking, forms or keeping GO up to date.	Good communication skills. Well organised. Good computer skills.
Advisers	An adviser is a specialist in a particular field such as the outdoors or the Brownie programme.	Good communication skills. Specialist experience in a particular area, section or programme.
Trainers	A trainer's role is to plan and deliver learning to volunteers. In this way they help make sure girls and young women get the best possible guiding programme experience.	Good communication skills. Good team-working skills. Experience in training others. Good interpersonal skills.

chart continues ➡

Unit leaders	Unit leaders - A unit leader runs Rainbow, Brownie, Guide or Ranger units. They are usually supported by Assistant leaders and Unit Helpers.	Good leadership skills. Good team-building skills. Willingness to work with children and young people.
Assistant leaders	Assistant leaders are women aged over 18.	Leadership skills. Good team-working skills. Willingness to work with children and young people.
Unit helpers	Unit helpers can be any volunteer aged over 18 who give their time and skills to support a unit.	Leadership skills. Good team-working skills. Willingness to work with children and young people.
Young leaders	A young woman aged 14 to 18 working with a unit.	Enthusiastic and reliable. Enjoys working with the girls. Can act as a good role model.
Treasurers	Treasurers provide support on financial matters. They do not need to be members.	Good communication skills. Good with figures. Well organised.

on the size of the area (geographically or number of volunteers), you may wish to have a larger or smaller team. The structure of the team should be reviewed regularly to ensure it meets the needs of the area and works effectively. Any changes you wish to make should be discussed with your division or county commissioner.

On becoming commissioner, you may inherit some volunteers who help you with the role of commissioner, such as those taking on the finances or responsibility for recruitment checks.

For a comprehensive list of roles, search for 'Volunteer roles' on the Girlguiding website

See also *Sharing the workload*, page 32.

Building relationships within your team

Your team is important in helping and supporting you during your time as commissioner so it is important to build strong team dynamics. The most effective teams are those in which the members have good working relationships and are able to communicate well with one another.

- Meet regularly - regular meetings are an easy way to gather everyone in your team and provide an ideal platform for getting to know each other. You could vary the types of meetings you hold - from informal gatherings to formal meetings aimed at making important decisions about guiding
- Communicate often - regular communication with all members of your team not only improves your relationships with team members but also helps you to keep track of progress. Any problems can be identified quickly to prevent misunderstandings. Think about different communication tools to engage different members of the team, for example email, texting, telephone conferences or Skype.

- Have fun - occasionally set aside time to do social activities with your team, for example a gathering at Christmas or to celebrate a birthday or special award. This can help improve team morale and give everyone time away from their usual tasks. Keep in mind that volunteers will have other commitments, so try to keep gatherings to a fixed time.
- Iron out problems/disagreements - sometimes when you work closely with others, disagreements and arguments may occur between your team members.

See also *Voicing concerns*, page 22;
Complaints, page 58;
What to do if... page 70.

As commissioner you are responsible for resolving any disputes that occur with additional help and support from other parties, for example your division or county commissioner. It is important to remain impartial and act quickly before an issue escalates.

- Embrace your differences - in your team you will have people with a variety of different personalities; some will be outgoing and loud, others will be shy and reserved. It is important to make sure that everyone is included in decision making and has the chance to express their opinions and points of view.
- Let your team members know they are appreciated - giving recognition can show how much you value their contribution. You can present badges, certificates or awards formally at the unit meeting or a district event. Even informal thanks, such as a card, flowers, or small gift, can show someone who has done more than their role that you appreciate this.

Welcoming and supporting new leaders and other volunteers

As a commissioner you are responsible for welcoming new volunteers into your district or division. It is important that new volunteers feel that they can turn to you for guidance and advice, especially while they are adjusting to their new role. Promote the principles of good guiding and the key messages of the organisation.

See also *Supporting good guiding*, page 25.

New volunteers are often thought of as people who are new and have not been involved in guiding before, but there are occasions when they may be existing members who are transferring from another area, or who are rejoining local guiding after some time away.

New volunteers may want to be involved at a unit level but it is important to find a role to suit each individual. A volunteer may feel disheartened if they think they have taken too much on or not been challenged enough.

Welcoming a new volunteer

- Be enthusiastic!
- When meeting a new volunteer for the first time, let them choose the meeting place. It is important that they feel comfortable in their surroundings.
- Find out about their skills and background - this will help you to find the most suitable role for them and will also make you aware of any useful skills that they can bring to the district or division.
- Listen - give them time to talk about their requirements and what they want to get from volunteering. This will help you to tailor the information you give them.

- Avoid information overload - it can be daunting for a new volunteer who has had little previous experience with guiding to be bombarded with lots of information and jargon. Give them information in small chunks and, again, tailor it to their needs.
- Support them in their decision in choosing their role. district and division volunteer needs should be considered, but you should not try to force anyone to take on a role they do not want to do!

For more information on the process of meeting a new volunteer, see GO, page 39.

Once a volunteer is in a role

- Welcome them at your next district or division meeting - introduce them to other volunteers and encourage the team to make them feel welcome. Invite them to attend with their mentor or buddy.
- Provide opportunities - give them the opportunity to meet other volunteers. You could consider taking them with you to unit visits as this can be an opportunity to find out how other units are run and for you to get to know the new volunteer.
- Stay in touch - a text message, phone call, email or visit now and then lets the volunteer know that you are there and can be contacted if they need support.

Volunteers who want to be leaders

If a volunteer decides she would like to be involved as a leader in a unit team, and you have determined that she would be suitable to become a leader, you will need to talk with her about the leadership qualification. Be positive and welcoming, and let her know about the process that will be followed.

- Add a role on GO for the leader in training, then contact the relevant leadership coordinator in your area - this may be at division or county level. The leadership coordinator will add to the record that the new volunteer is working on relevant modules of the leadership qualification. They will then liaise with you to assign a mentor. Where possible, it is recommended that mentors are not from the same District so that new leaders can see how guiding is run in other areas, but this is not a requirement.
- Liaise with the new volunteer and her mentor to ensure that suitable opportunities are provided to complete modules in the leadership qualification.
- Support the Leader in her unit and your area, and keep up
- Celebrate! Organise a celebration when she has gained her leadership qualification.

Find '*Supporting leaders in training - commissioners*' resource on the leadership qualification section of the website.

Students

If you have a college or university in your area there can be opportunities to recruit students and involve them in guiding. Some may already be members and wish to carry on as a Ranger or in a leadership role. Others might feel volunteering could help with their course or career plans. As commissioner you need to promote flexible opportunities that enable students to volunteer in your area and give support to them.

See also *Flexible guiding*, page 65.

Supporting existing volunteers

Being a leader involves motivating, encouraging and advising volunteers. As commissioner, your team should be able to look to you for support and guidance. Volunteers within your area should be encouraged and supported to meet their own guiding needs

so that they can feel confident in their role. It is important that commissioners give every volunteer a chance to think about how to develop their skills. By doing this, volunteers will continue to enjoy volunteering with Girlguiding, which will ensure that there are sufficient leaders to take guiding forward.

Development opportunities for volunteers can include taking a residential qualification, sharing their skills and knowledge by becoming a trainer or adviser, or taking on a temporary appointment such as being on a planning team for a fun day or a camp.

Search for 'Learning and Development' on the Girlguiding website.

- Give positive encouragement - try to meet every volunteer on a regular basis to thank them for what they have done for guiding. Tell them that they are doing a good job (as long as they are!) and encourage them to continue with their hard work. Let them know what further opportunities are available to them.
- Listen - give your team members the opportunity to express opinions, and ensure that these opinions are considered and passed on as appropriate. If a volunteer needs assistance in their guiding role, listen to their concerns and avoid interrupting. Ensure that views from Unit Leaders are considered in decision-making.
- Share and pass on all information - it may be interesting or relevant to someone in your team.
- Help at points of crisis and be available to listen and advise.
- Give constructive criticism - make sure that any feedback that you give is done with the intention of helping the volunteer to improve. Always start with a positive comment and avoid using negative words and phrases.
- Development needs - be proactive in finding out the learning needs of your team, and letting them know what is available. Talk to team members about what they would like to achieve. Some areas set targets with their volunteers to help them in their development.

- Let your team know you are there to support them - tell them the most convenient times and ways they can contact you. They should be able to see you as a point of contact for queries, questions and general support, as well as in times of crisis.

There are also times when adult members decide that, for whatever reason, they need to take a break from their guiding roles. It could be a new job or baby, moving house, or an upheaval such as divorce

See *Exit interviews*, page 53.

or redundancy. Whatever the reason, change can be challenging and as commissioner you need to support the person leaving as well as ensuring that there is someone to take over. Have a chat with them and thank them for their contribution. Enable them to keep in touch - they may choose to return one day.

Code of conduct

Girlguiding has a code of conduct for all members and volunteers to follow as everyone needs to be aware of the impact that their behaviour has on the young members in their care. As a commissioner, you must see that this is followed.

As a Girlguiding volunteer you must always:

- *be a good role model with behaviour and an attitude that are in line with our values and the Promise*
- *comply with all applicable UK laws and guidance. If your unit is based outside the UK or you are part of an activity outside the UK, you must also abide by the law of that country*
- *make sure you follow Girlguiding policies and procedures and re-read them from time to time as they may be amended*
- *deliver the [Girlguiding programme](#) to young members if you're a unit volunteer. When volunteering with adults in guiding, support them to meet the Girlguiding programme requirements, to play your part in giving a consistently great Girlguiding experience.*
- *be responsible and accountable in the way you perform your role*
- *be fair and treat everyone with respect and dignity in accordance with our [Equality and Diversity policy](#)*

Search for 'Code of Conduct' on the website.

- *respect others' privacy in line with our policies and guidance*
- *communicate with others in an open and respectful way whether in person, by phone, writing or digital media*
- *work together with Girlguiding members, their parents/ carers and members of the public to promote Girlguiding's mission and values.*

As a Girlguiding volunteer you must not act fraudulently or dishonestly, or do anything which brings (or is likely to bring) Girlguiding into disrepute or have a negative impact on Girlguiding or its reputation.

Voicing concerns

If you have any concerns about the suitability of a volunteer, discuss them with your division or county commissioner. Are there doubts about the individual working with children or volunteering with other adults? Are there concerns about issues or incidents outside of guiding? Or is it just that they do things differently from how you would do them? If you feel that a volunteer's continued involvement in guiding would not be in the best interests of the girls or the team, telling them will require sensitive handling.

Occasionally it is necessary to limit the role an individual member or recognised volunteer can undertake or to remove a member's role within Girlguiding. This does not happen very often and few commissioners are likely to experience what is involved. All withdrawals and restrictions of volunteer roles are handled by the county commissioner in consultation with the chief commissioner. Consult your county commissioner to discuss this further.

Trefoil Guild

Trefoil Guild is an organisation for anyone aged 18 and over. It is a branch of Girlguiding but has a separate constitution and is independently administered.

Between them, Trefoil Guild members have a wealth of both guiding and life experience, and are usually very willing to help or support their local guiding community. They can do this in many ways, from raising funds and providing grants for new units to teaching a wide variety of skills.

Establishing and maintaining two-way communication with your local Trefoil Guild can help support your district or division. Trefoil Guild members welcome invitations to celebrations or events, as many like to keep regular contact with girls in units. Members may be willing to help on occasion in a unit, or organise an activity at a day event. Make sure that you share our [unit safeguarding guidelines](#) with anyone who isn't a registered volunteer.

Any member of Trefoil Guild who helps at units on a regular basis (attending three or more meetings per term) must become a registered member of Girlguiding, and be on GO as a Unit helper. Membership, and therefore subscriptions, of the two organisations are separate.

Good guiding and visiting units

Good guiding is about the leadership team at every level doing its best to ensure that what is offered to each member is the best guiding experience. Monitoring each unit or district, knowing what they have planned and put in place, is vital to knowing if quality guiding is being consistently offered.

You should be familiar with the programmes, resources and trainings for all of the sections. Supporting the volunteers in your area includes:

- offering advice on programme aspects
- visiting units to see programmes put into practice
- working with units to promote good guiding and facilitating a unit's development
- helping smooth the transition between sections
- promoting best practice.

The fundamentals of good guiding

The fundamentals of good guiding involve the following.

- Knowing and putting into practice the Five Essentials.
- Checking that the girls and young women are having fun, and that every meeting takes place in a safe space.
- Seeing evidence that the girls and young women are regularly doing activities in small groups, for example in their sixes or patrols, as well as in their units as a whole.
- Checking that the guiding programme is being followed appropriately for a group's age and ability, with young members involved in making decisions.
- Monitoring over a year that there is a variety of activities that include new experiences, adventure, community action and at least two activities outside the meeting place.
- Making sure that girls and young women know about all the opportunities available to them, regardless of whether their own leaders are providing them or not.
- Asking that, wherever possible, there is at least one residential opportunity on offer to the girls and young women each year, including opportunities provided by others where appropriate.
- Tracking and checking that members are encouraged to move on to the next section in a timely and supported way.
- Encouraging leaders to make an effort to read *guiding* magazine and guiding e-newsletters, and asking them to follow guiding news on the Girlguiding website, and attend local meetings.
- Keeping a record that leaders attend at least one relevant event a year to keep their guiding skills and knowledge up to date.

Leadership teams should be making an effort to cover these fundamentals. *Doing our best* (see page 83) puts these fundamentals into practice and can help to plan ahead, to evaluate what has gone before, or simply to check at any time what your area is doing well and what could be improved.

Supporting good guiding

The *Doing our best standards* have checklists for good unit guiding across a number of areas. Ensure that you and the Leaders in your area are aware of these areas.

- Keep in touch with what is going on in your area by asking for updates on what each unit or district is doing, and receive this feedback during meetings. Encourage ‘air and share’ sessions between team members to share ideas, activities, interests and skills.
- Look for where units and areas need support - not everything needs to be done by units themselves. Arrange for district or division events and let them know of trainings and events being held.
- Encourage units to support each other, and to share skills and qualifications. For example one unit could take girls and Leaders from another unit on their residential to ensure that as many girls as possible have a residential opportunity.
- Use district or division meetings to bring awareness of any issues to light. *Guiding Conversations* is a series of documents around a variety of topics, aimed at stimulating discussion on matters that are important to the local area and for volunteers to share their skills and ideas. It gives structure and support to addressing key issues and can help in producing an action plan for units, districts and divisions to aim towards.
- Utilise your area’s trainers and advisers. Invite them to give a ‘fireside’ training as part of a district or division meeting.

Search for ‘Guiding conversations’ on the Girlguiding website.

Visiting units

Visiting units will give you the opportunity to meet leadership teams and observe what is happening. Different units face different challenges: the behaviour of girls, financial limitations, meeting-place restrictions, the varying knowledge and experience of leaders, and so on. A visit can help you to see these and offer advice and support.

Getting to know team members as individuals can help you understand their needs.

When visiting a unit:

- observe what is going on and provide help when needed but be careful not to take over the meeting
- make time at the end of the meeting to speak to members of the leadership team; ask them if they have any concerns
- keep in touch and let them know you are there if they need support
- when evaluating unit programmes, consider them over a period of time
- tackle issues in a positive and supportive way and offer constructive feedback
- offer section training to leaders to help give new programme ideas.

To give constructive feedback:

- follow up promptly
- choose the time and place carefully - a comfortable location where interruptions are unlikely
- always start off with positive aspects you have seen and encourage the leaders to identify what they thought went well
- through discussion help the leaders to identify areas for development

More information can be found in *Appendix 1, Unit visits, page 77.*

- agree a plan for introducing any changes
- identify any support the volunteer may need to put the changes into effect
- agree to meet again to discuss progress
- finish the conversation by referring back to the positive aspects identified
- thank them for giving up their time on behalf of the girls they look after.

Team meetings

As commissioner it is necessary for you to hold regular district or division meetings. Depending on your area, the attendees at your meeting can vary. If you directly oversee units, then leaders from the units will attend the meeting. If you are in a division that manages districts, then district commissioners or a district representative will attend.

These meetings give everybody the opportunity to come together and discuss guiding in your area. They also give you the chance to identify areas that need improvement and to hear about what is happening in your area.

District or division meetings can be held as frequently as you and your team feel is appropriate - monthly or less frequently, depending on need. Traditionally, most district or division meetings have focused on passing on information, but with electronic communication, websites and *guiding* magazine, much of this can now be done in other ways. This can then free up the meeting to focus on local matters and the time much better spent on getting to know everyone and providing support. Don't be afraid to make it a purely social occasion, or to start with some quick activities to help people relax and enable them to get to know each other better. Remember that even leaders from the same unit may not often have much time to chat, and it will help newer Leaders to mix with others. **Remember that your most important job as a commissioner is to listen and support your local leaders.**

Organising the meeting

- Attendees - when would be the most convenient time for members in your area to attend? Avoid working hours, weekends and school holidays where possible. If units in your area meet every day of the week, think about switching days each time that you hold a meeting to ensure that the same unit doesn't miss out every time.

- The venue - make sure your chosen venue is available on the date you have planned the meeting and check that it is adequate for the number of members you are expecting. Make sure your venue is accessible to all and is spacious and quiet enough to ensure your meeting can go well.
- Agenda - write an agenda which divides the meeting into topics. Include your team in setting the agenda, and think about the areas of guiding you and your team want to discuss at the meeting. It can also be useful to get members of the team to deliver parts of the meeting, to help leaders' development needs, as well as utilising those who may have specialist knowledge on some topics. Send out the agenda in advance of the meeting.
- Make sure you have asked somebody to take notes or minutes at the meeting.
- If a physical meeting is not possible, consider setting up a telephone conference or Skype call.

Effective communication in meetings

- Plan ahead - make sure you are clear about what you are going to talk about.
- Speak clearly.
- Ensure that all team members are given the opportunity to express their opinions.
- Ask people if they have any questions at the end of the meeting.
- Ensure that the minutes for the meeting are typed up and distributed to attendees within a short period following the meeting. Flag action points and any key dates clearly.

By using *Guiding Conversations* you can informally open up discussions on topics that might be issues for some Leaders. This open approach often prompts positive support from Leaders for someone who is struggling with this topic. *Guiding Conversations* can be found by searching for 'Guiding Conversations' on the Girlguiding website.

Guiding Conversations is a series of documents intended to be used to facilitate discussions on set topics at district or division meetings. Anyone can lead the Conversation; it does not need to be a commissioner. One of the few times that leaders get together independently of girls is at their district or division meeting. They can therefore use this opportunity to discuss issues that are important to the local area and to share their skills and ideas. The intention is that anyone in the district or division can take a Guiding Conversation and use it to facilitate a 20-minute discussion. This could be the commissioner, trainer or any leader interested in the subject.

Managing your time

As commissioner, it may seem that there are a lot of demands on your time - with so many things to do, remember or keep an eye on, if you are not careful it could become overwhelming. Effective time management relies on prioritisation, good decision-making and delegation. With the help of these, being a commissioner can become much more manageable.

- Take steps to ensure that you still have time for family, friends - and yourself! Value your own time - if you don't, no one else will.
- Remember that you may not be able to do everything that your team may ask of you - be realistic and honest so people's expectations are reasonable. Learn how to say 'No'!
- Consider setting up a new email address that is used only for guiding. This will help make sure that private messages are not overlooked, and that your guiding email can be shared without causing disruption to your personal emails.
- Set aside times during the week for correspondence such as answering emails and responding to phone calls. Don't be afraid to switch on the answer phone to protect mealtimes and family time - to manage their expectations let your team know when they can expect a reply from you.

- Establish clear channels of communication, so that enquiries such as ‘Who do I need to contact about...’ don’t need to go through you. Keep reports and correspondence informative but brief. Plan telephone calls beforehand to keep them focused and on-topic.
- Keep a list of tasks that need to be done, prioritise them and schedule them into a timetable/calendar. Ask team members to help you with your tasks or delegate tasks if you feel it is necessary.
- Have an effective filing system so you can find things easily.
- Avoid creating an atmosphere of crisis - a ‘quick fix’ approach seldom allows you to perform at your best.
- Don’t feel guilty about using the measures mentioned above - you will be able to focus on guiding tasks during ‘guiding time’ and be much more effective.

Decision-making

Making decisions is a key part of being a commissioner. Indecision and procrastination can stop you getting things done.

- The best time of day to make decisions is when you are in your ‘prime time’ - the time when you are on top form, have the clearest perspective, and can think faster and better.
- Don’t invest more time in a decision than it is really worth.
- Gather as many facts as possible and consider the risks. Remember that you can share decision-making with your commissioner, or speak to her for support.
- Try to sleep on decisions before making them.
- Investigate alternatives and negative consequences, make the decision and implement it.
- Use specialists to help with specialist problems, such as consulting your county treasurer on money matters.
- Don’t regret your mistakes - just learn from them.

Prioritising

There are two ways of prioritising - taking a long-term view which covers everything you have to do over a significant period of

time, and a short-term view which perhaps covers only one day. Differentiate between what is important and what is urgent, and decide how much time should be spent on each.

Important things are those which have a great effect, such as discussing a leader's personal progress or planning next term's activities. Urgent things are those which typically have a deadline and need immediate attention, such as preparing for that evening's district meeting.

If something is less important it doesn't mean that it shouldn't be done - just that it has a lesser priority until it becomes either urgent or important.

Operate a 'To do' list. The time taken to compile it is a good investment - it enables you to focus on those tasks which merit the highest priority and encourages a feeling of control, it means tasks don't get overlooked, and it provides a visual representation of progress.

To help with prioritising, the 'ACE' card model can be helpful. Sort problems into the following three categories in order to organise what your priority should be.

Action - problems are known and can be tackled by applying known procedures.

Critical - problems which need decisive and immediate action. Requires someone to take charge as they may threaten an event or the organisation.

Enduring - these problems are ever present; they need to be managed as they are rarely fully resolved.

Sharing the workload

Having a strong district or division team will give you opportunities to delegate some of your tasks to your team members. This will ease your workload, and can also give others valuable experience and help them develop their skills. Routine tasks especially can be handed over to a team member.

What can you share or delegate?

It is possible to delegate the majority of a commissioner's tasks - it is therefore much easier to say what cannot be delegated!

Areas of work which CANNOT be delegated are the following.

- Anything that requires the commissioner's authorisation. This includes Residential Event Notification forms for all residential and international trips, any Awards forms and the Starting a New Unit Grant form.

If you are unavailable to give authorisation when required, this responsibility can be passed to any other commissioner, either a commissioner at the same level or at the next level up. Assistant commissioners or assistants are not empowered to give authorisation in your place.

- Agreeing roles with individuals.
- Confidential matters that may require discreet enquiries to be made.

You should also be wary of delegating tasks which are exceptions to normal policy or routine and which could have serious consequences if mishandled.

When delegating a task, be aware of the following.

- Consider both time and skill - the person who has the right skill may not necessarily have the time. Delegate to those who have the time or need the experience.

- Make sure that the person you are asking to do the task is happy to do it.
- Ensure that the person clearly understands the task, accepts any limitation (for example budget, deadlines, etc), knows who else is involved, the extent of their responsibilities, and when and how to report back.
- Once a task is delegated, remain available to offer support and advice as required but let go of the task itself. Otherwise, you may create more work for yourself!
- If you are delegating tasks to numerous people, ensure that you are able to keep track of the progress effectively.

It is important to remember that when delegating work, you are ultimately responsible for ensuring that tasks are carried out satisfactorily.

Job-sharing

Job-sharing the role of commissioner not only spreads the workload but also enables more skills to be brought to the role and promotes peer support.

When doing the role of commissioner as a job-share, those sharing the role must define from the start who is responsible for each task. Everyone sharing the role will be recorded on GO as a commissioner, but one person will be the main contact for the level. Once the tasks are shared it is vital that this information is communicated to everyone in the district or division so that people know who to go to for what. Having a district or division email account that both commissioners can access can help centralise contact for everyone, keep all communication in one place and help avoid confusion.

Regular catch-up meetings or phone calls are important between those sharing the role. Major decisions should be made together in consultation with the whole district or division.

Charity Trustees

In England and Wales, acceptance of a Girlguiding appointment as a leader or commissioner automatically makes you a charity trustee. This means that leaders and commissioners must handle and account for all monies collected, raised and spent in guiding accurately and solely for the benefit of the membership and are entrusted to use guiding funds appropriately. There are occasions when there is more responsibility in trusteeship, usually in regards to property or land rented or owned by a unit, district or division when the holding unit or area may need to register as a charity separately. For more information and support, please contact the Girlguiding Info Team. For Scotland and Northern Ireland this is not necessarily the case. Please contact your respective Country Headquarters for further information and support on the procedure in your area:

administrator@girlguiding-scot.org.uk or
info@girlguidingulster.org.uk.

If you or your partner has been declared bankrupt, then you are unable to become a charity trustee. If this is the case, or for more support on this, please contact Guiding Services.

Search for 'Finance' on the Girlguiding website.

For more information on charitable status and financial guidance **search for 'Finance policy' on the Girlguiding website.**

Being a part of the division or county team

As a district or division commissioner you are a member of the division or county team. Attending your division or county meetings is important for receiving information and being involved in the decision-making process at these levels. You may require support from your division or county commissioner and she, in turn, will get support from you.

You are responsible for representing all the members from your area at these meetings and speaking on their behalf as well as making decisions as a trustee of the division or county. It is important that you make sure you pass on the majority's opinions and then feed back to your district or division team promptly. You must be up to date with division or county matters and be a supportive member of these teams.

These meetings are your opportunity to get to know other commissioners and share problems, successes, best practice and ideas. Listening and sharing at these meetings will give you support and the opportunity to learn how other commissioners carry out this role.

Support

There are various resources available in the commissioners' section of the members' area on the Girlguiding website which can give further information on a variety of subjects. Answers to commonly asked questions are posted, along with other useful resources.

There are regular e-newsletters from Girlguiding for all commissioners containing articles on subjects relevant to the commissioner and her role. Make sure your role and preferences on GO are up to date so that you receive these.

You are not expected to know everything - ask questions and find out where you can find answers. Get to know the advisers and coordinators in your county, and who does what. If you cannot find what you need, you can try the Girlguiding Website, the help files in GO or email the volunteer learning and development team, at: learning@girlguiding.org.uk.

Chapter 2

Processes and resources

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As a commissioner, there are a number of processes and procedures which you will be involved with. Volunteers will come to you to ask for clarification and advice. In this section we answer some frequently asked questions and give other information which you may need on a regular basis.

This is not an extensive list - the Girlguiding website can be helpful and some subjects have dedicated published and downloadable resources which contain further information. You can also email learning@girlguiding.org.uk if you can't find what you need.

Membership systems

GO

Girlguiding's Guiding Organiser (GO) is a membership database, which can be used to manage new enquiries and track existing volunteers' membership history.

See also *Welcoming and supporting new Leaders and other volunteers*, page 17.

New enquiries

Prospective volunteers and parents of girls and young women can register their interest in guiding via our website. The system allows parent enquirers to select preferred units by name or distance. Their enquiry is then sent to the appropriate unit, and the leader of that unit then makes direct contact with the enquirer.

As a commissioner, you handle volunteer enquiries. An email notification is sent directly to your district or division main contact when a volunteer enquiry is made. You will be able to meet with the enquirer to discuss what role they would like, what time they can commit and so on. Once you have contacted the volunteer and they've seen a unit in action (if appropriate) and decided they want to stay, or if the volunteer would like to try a different location, you can refer their enquiry onto another area. Once a unit has been decided you can assign them a role through GO. The system will then start the recruitment checks process (if required).

Search for 'GO reports' on the Girlguiding website.

Any volunteer who is already a guiding member and is undertaking a new role, or moving area, should be added through the Volunteer Roles tab within GO for the required level using their existing membership number.

Search for 'Growing our membership' on the Girlguiding website.

Existing members

GO allows our members and recognised volunteers to record and manage their guiding information and level information depending on the role(s) held. Volunteers and rangers are able to ensure that their guiding achievements are recorded and are responsible for keeping their contact details correct. GO enables users to run and produce reports for their unit, district, division and county, helping to manage guiding in their areas. Leaders are able to record girl progress through the programme using GO.

It is Girlguiding policy that all members and recognised volunteers have their basic information accurately recorded on GO. A girl is a member from the time she attends her second meeting. Details for young members are updated by a parent/carer or a member of the Unit user group (any active leader, assistant leader, leader in training or unit administrator).

Volunteers are responsible for maintaining their own data, either directly or via a nominated person, and should not store members' information on their own personal computer programs or in paper format, as stated in [Girlguiding's data protection policy](#). If any volunteers have any questions or concerns direct them to the Data Protection and Membership Recruitment pages of the Girlguiding website.

As a commissioner, you are responsible for updating the roles and qualifications of the volunteers in your area as well as ensuring that recruitment checks are completed. This includes ensuring that roles are added, removed, or extended and disclosure checks (PVG/DBS/ANI) are applied for. You do not have to be the one to do this; you can ask another member of the district or division user group (perhaps the district or division administrator) to take on this responsibility. However, you will still be the first point of contact for a member who requires support. If you are unable to solve an issue, contact your county's GO coordinator, who will be able to help.

If, as commissioner, you are updating roles but are also a leader with the unit, you will need to ensure that you access the unit's record via your commissioner tab within GO. If you access via the unit leader tab you will be unable to add or update volunteer roles for your own unit team.

There is a wide selection of information available to help you with GO including downloadable help files and help videos within the GO Help Zone.

A full list of recognised roles for each level, which include GO level access and recruitment check requirements, can be found in the Access levels pages on the Girlguiding website. Check for updates on these pages.

If you have any issues, email membershipsistemas@girlguiding.org.uk

How can GO help me?

You can view and download information from GO which can help you to manage your area and succession plan. These include information on roles in your area, a breakdown of the units, number of volunteers and girls, and so on. Visit the GO Help Zone for more details.

See *Growing the membership*, page 62 for more information on using reports in your area.

When can a new volunteer access GO?

New volunteers can access their enquiry details on GO as soon as they've registered their interest. Once their recruitment checks are complete and their role is active they will then have access to their membership record through the same login details they created as an enquirer.

Recruitment checks

Those undertaking a volunteer role will be required to complete the appropriate recruitment checks for that role. The recruitment check process involves a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check (Access NI for those in Northern Ireland and PVG for those in Scotland), and references from two referees (one of whom can be involved in guiding) for BGO and Branches check with your chief commissioner.

A district or division commissioner does not necessarily have to handle the disclosure check process; but you must make sure it is being followed. The ID Verifier is a separate role that deals with this area of work. In some areas the commissioner and ID Verifier are the same person.

As a commissioner, the following are the most important points for you to remember.

- All unit leaders, assistant leaders, unit helpers, DofE volunteers (aged over 18) and anyone over the age of 18 attending a residential camp must complete Girlguiding's recruitment checks when required. This includes the relevant disclosure checks for the country in which they volunteer. They must not have unsupervised access to girls or attend overnight at a residential event until this has happened.
- New volunteers must provide contact details of two referees. One referee can be an adult member of Girlguiding. Neither of the referees can be related to or a partner of the new volunteer. Explain this when meeting a new volunteer. For members turning 18 who wish to volunteer, search 'recruitment and vetting procedures' on the Girlguiding website.
- A new volunteer's details can be found on GO but they do not get a membership number until all recruitment checks are satisfactorily completed and recorded on GO.
- When a volunteer or member moves roles, their recruitment check status should be reviewed. References are needed only once in a volunteer's lifetime, unless they have been absent

from guiding for more than three years. Disclosures must be renewed every three years.

The full list of roles and their DBS disclosure check requirements can be found in Access levels page on the Girlguiding website.

To find out more information about the ID Verifier role contact your County Coordinator for ID Verifiers.

Membership - helpful information

[Follow this link](#) for the most up-to-date information.

All volunteers should be listed on GO including those who are in roles that do not require them to be members. An annual subscription is charged for an adult member. Members enjoy a variety of benefits including:

- access to the members' area on the Girlguiding website
- exclusive special offers from a wide range of companies including saving money on days out, magazine subscriptions and much more
- quarterly *guiding* magazine and monthly e-newsletters.

Membership is mandatory for the majority of roles within guiding. A full list of roles and their membership requirements can be found by searching 'Volunteer roles' on the Girlguiding website.

When does a girl become a member?

A girl is a member from the time she attends her second unit meeting.

Volunteer roles open to everyone.

Adult membership is open to women and men aged 18 and over. Some roles can only be held by women. You can find more information on the Girlguiding [equality and diversity policies](#) on our website.

Adult-to-girl ratios

Girlguiding has recommended ratios for units in the meeting place. These can be found on the Girlguiding website. As commissioner, you should know how the units in your area are run - whether there are enough leaders for a unit, or whether they have a Leadership team or use a parent rota. If a Brownie or Guide unit has to resort to being run by one leader on a temporary basis, for example due to illness, or care commitments, you must be informed - even if it is just via a text message from the other leader informing you that it's only her that night for a certain reason.

You must be satisfied that there is another suitable adult present for the unit to run safely.

The ratios become mandatory when taking the unit out of the normal meeting place, and undertaking certain activities. The activity finder and Residential events pages on the Girlguiding website contain details of requirements for specific activities, along with qualifications, ratios and minimum requirements for residential events, and are updated frequently.

First aid

You must make sure there is one person present at every meeting that has completed their first aid training. As commissioner, it is your responsibility to make sure that this is the case. You can do this by using the First aid certificate report which is available on GO, this will identify leaders whose first aid certificates will become invalid in the next six months. Girlguiding's 1st Response course, including the compulsory e-learning, is valid for three years, after which individuals will need to complete the full course again. Alternative first aid qualifications can be accepted, and more information on this can be found by searching 'accepted first aid qualifications' on the Girlguiding website.

Activities outside of the meeting place

When a unit undertakes an activity outside the meeting place, as the local commissioner you should be aware of it. A form does not need to be filled out, nor does permission have to be acquired from the commissioner, as long as Girlguiding policy is adhered to - an email, phone call or text message is acceptable.

- Parental permission is required for adventurous activities and for activities that are undertaken out of the usual meeting times or away from the usual meeting place.

If undertaking multiple activities, it is acceptable to list them all on one Information/Consent form.

- A home contact must also be set up where the activity takes place away from the usual meeting time and place.

Search for 'Guidance on activities' on the Girlguiding website.

Residential events

As a commissioner you are responsible for providing support to leaders running a residential and giving approval for a residential event to proceed. Much of this support may be delegated to other members of your team, such as advisers, but approval for an event can only be given by you.

There are different regulations for each type of event which require a leader to hold or be working towards the relevant Going Away With scheme modules. Ensure that you are up to date with the current regulations which can be found in the 'events and going away' section of the website.

When a leader wants to plan a residential event she must first have a conversation with you. She should check that her venue choice and proposed activities meet the needs of her girls. If any advice is needed beforehand, put the leader in contact with the relevant advisers. Ensure that she has read the relevant Residential Event Notification form and guidance and understands the process.

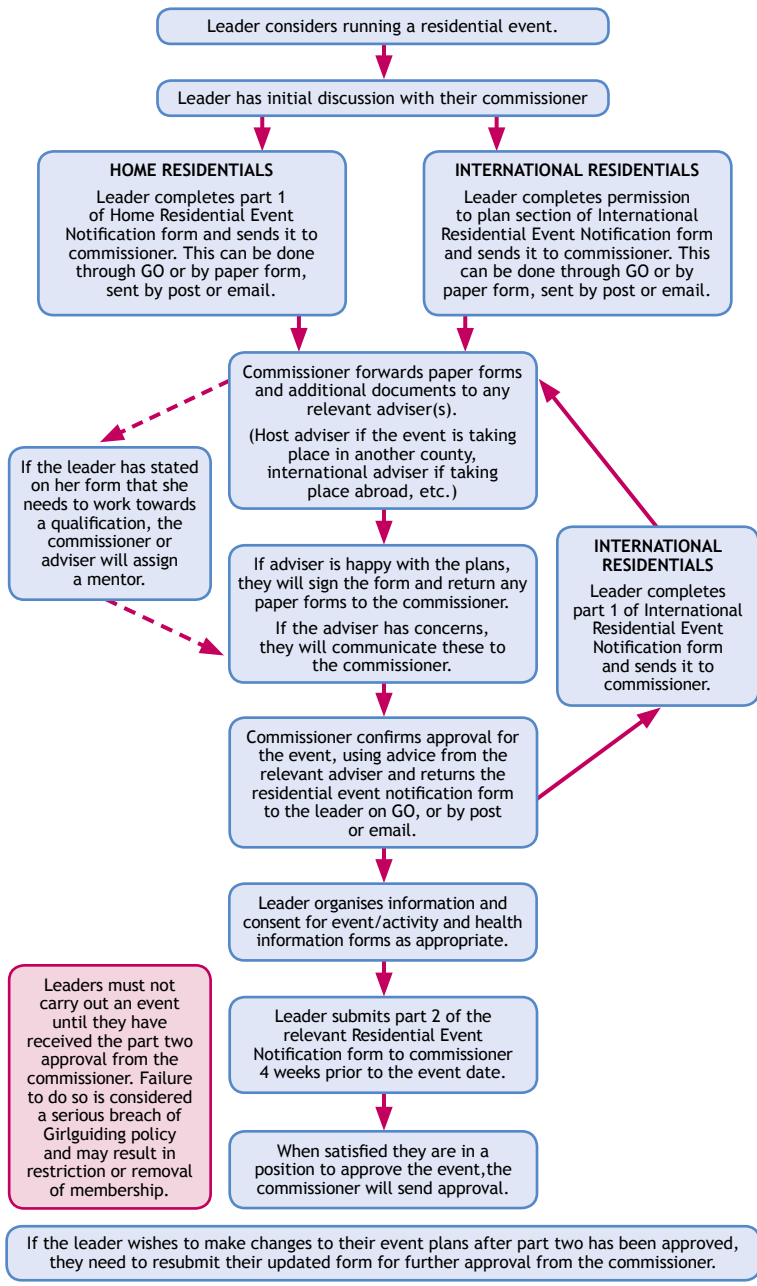
The leader will fill out the Residential Event Notification form as soon as possible and, for a home event, at least twelve weeks before the event (see flow chart opposite), and forward it to the

relevant commissioner. In exceptional circumstances you can allow leaders to submit this form later than the minimum period and this is subject to your discretion as commissioner. The points that need to be checked on receipt of the Residential Event Notification form include that:

Search for 'Supporting leaders to run events' on the Girlguiding website, for more information

- a leader or the event coordinator holds, or is working towards, the relevant modules from Girlguiding's *Going Away With* scheme that are needed to run the event.
- a leader has a mentor if she's still completing modules of the *Going Away With* scheme.
- the Girlguiding ratio of adults to girls is met.

Residential event process



- the makeup of the leadership team is appropriate for the group's needs (for example, if other young children are attending, an extra adult will be responsible for them).
- recruitment and vetting checks have been completed by all volunteers.
- all volunteers attending have at least Level 1 and 2 of A Safe Space, and the leader in charge has completed Level 3.
- any volunteer with first aid responsibilities on the event has done a suitable and valid first aid course.
- a thorough risk assessment has been completed.
- the guidelines are being followed for residential events and any adventurous activities (as outlined in the Adventure for girls finder on the Girlguiding website).
- the leader has listed a home contact, and that you have been provided their details in case of an emergency.

You should forward the form to any relevant advisers who will either sign the form and return it to you if they are happy with the plans, or communicate to you any issues. You then go back to the leader with any issues. Any advice from the adviser to the leader at this stage goes through you. It's good practice for an adviser to see every form, but the list below shows when you must pass the form on to be signed by a relevant adviser (eg residential, outdoor activity or international adviser) to confirm whether they are happy for the residential to carry on into the next stage of planning:

- if a *Going Away With* scheme assessment is required
- if a Guide camp permit or Lead Away permit assessment is required
- if they're organising a large-scale event.


Once you are satisfied you can confirm approval for the event using advice from the relevant Advisers if appropriate and return the Residential Event Notification form to the leader via GO, or by post or email. For the downloadable paper form, a signature is not required if it is completed electronically and emailed back. Four weeks before the event, you will receive confirmed information on part 2 of the form. As a commissioner, you are

responsible for units going away so authorisation should not be given unless all points above have been completed and you are satisfied with the leadership Team and set-up. If you have any concerns, you should flag these up with the leader, or seek further advice.

The process for international events is similar but leaders should use the International Residential Event Notification Form which includes giving permission to plan. The permission to plan section should be submitted nine to eighteen months in advance. All International Residential Event Notification forms must be seen and signed by an international adviser.

For large scale events - those with 100+ participants including adults and the event team - part one of the relevant Residential Event Notification form should be submitted 12 to 18 months in advance and an updated risk assessment and itinerary should be sent to you four months in advance.

Closer to the event, you should check that a Home Contact system is in place, and that the person has your phone number in case of emergency. This is to ensure you are kept informed.



Search for 'documents for events and travel' on the Girlguiding website

A participant in the event must not act as authorising commissioner for that event.

A county commissioner attending their unit event as a unit leader can have the form authorised by their district commissioner. If they're attending a county event as a county commissioner, then the chief commissioner, or delegated deputy, for the country/region needs to sign. If the chief commissioner is attending a region or international event, the chief guide or deputy chief guide must sign it off or, if they're unavailable, another chief commissioner.

Forms must never be signed by family members; if the authorising commissioner is related to the leader running the residential then the form should be passed to the commissioner above.

You can find more information about planning events and residential from:

- *Going away with guiding*
- *Going Away With Scheme*
- 'events' section of the website
- 'Including all' section of the website.

Going Away With scheme

If someone in your area is working towards achieving the Going Away With licence or any additional modules, a mentor needs to be assigned. Depending on your area, this is done by you or by an adviser. If the leader who is sending in the Residential Event Notification form requires a licence assessment, you should check with the leader whether a visit to the event is required, and if it needs to be arranged.

Families of volunteers attending residential events

Members of a volunteer's family, of any gender, may attend residential events with the permission of the commissioner and appropriate adviser.

When a leader submits the Residential Event Notification form, she must supply the following details about family members who wish to attend:

- their relationship to the volunteer
- the age of children/young people
- the gender of family members
- any appropriate experience they may have
- recruitment checks completed.

As commissioner, you should consult with the relevant advisers and consider these aspects, plus any other factors which could affect the event. These could include the total number of family members, the age group the event is designed for, the activities planned for the event and the venue in which the event is taking place.

Separate toilet and sleeping arrangements need to be made for any extra family members attending the residential. If young children are present, an extra adult is required to look after them.

How to open a new unit

When starting a new unit, or reopening a closed unit, research should be carried out to ensure that there is a need and that it is sustainable. For example, are there enough girls in the area for the age group of the section? Are there younger girls in the area who could potentially become members when they reach the minimum age for the section?

Search for 'Growing our membership' on the Girlguiding website

If you agree there is a need for a unit, you can check on GO if a unit of that name already exists in your area. If a unit with the same name exists but is inactive, you can reopen the unit on County GO. This keeps the unit history intact.

Once the new unit has been created it will appear in your active levels list on GO. You can then add volunteer roles to the new level. You can also add the new unit as 'proposed' on GO, which means you are able to add volunteer roles and girls who would like to join before it becomes active. Once a level has been created it is the responsibility of the unit team to manage the logistics of getting the unit set up, for example where and when a unit meets. You should use your local knowledge to support and guide them through this process, especially if the unit team is new to guiding. You can also 'buddy' them up with another established unit to see how it runs and to ask questions about what needs to be done. The level team is also responsible for adding girl roles.

Things to consider, together with the unit leadership team, when opening a new unit:

Establish the need for the unit

▼

Form the leadership team

▼

*Plan the meeting place,
day and time*

▼

*Open a unit bank account and consider
finances and fundraising*

▼

*Complete trainings and start LQ if leaders
are new to guiding*

▼

Recruit girls to join

▼

Plan your programme and buy relevant resources

▼

Before you start, sit down with the leadership team and go through everything there is to do and how long things are going to take. For a full checklist search 'New unit checklist' on the Girlguiding website.

Search for 'Starting a new unit' on the Girlguiding website.

Starting a New Unit Grant

The Starting a New Unit Grant is available for all new units, and units reopened after 12 months or more of closure. Forms and guidance are available online. The grant application form requires your signature. You'll find a handy checklist on the form, which outlines the information needed for you to sign off.

Requesting a Unit Registration certificate

To request the Unit Registration certificate for a unit, contact your County's GO Coordinator who will be able to pass it on.

How to close a unit

Before starting the process of closing a unit, consider all options for keeping the unit open. This should include identifying the reasons you're considering closing and creating a plan of actions to take. Search 'Keeping units open' on the Girlguiding website. Sometimes a unit has to be closed because there are not enough girls to make it viable, or the unit team is no longer able to support the unit. When the decision has been made to close a unit, any active and waiting-to-transfer girls and their parents must be made aware of the decision and offered the choice of joining alternative units. Give the parents their daughter's membership number to make transfer on GO easier. Also inform prospective members from any GO enquiries.

Girls should be made inactive on GO, and once you have checked there are no active or waiting-to-transfer girls in the unit that is closing, you should make the volunteer roles inactive. Once this has been done, you can mark the unit as closed on GO.

Any unit funds left over are transferred to the district or division, and held in trust for one year in case the unit reopens. After that, the funds are dispersed into the district or division accounts. For more information search 'Process of closing a unit' on the Girlguiding website.

Exit interviews

Finding out why someone wants to leave guiding is really important. It may highlight an issue which can be resolved, or there may be an alternative way for the person to continue as a member - if someone really wants to leave they are more likely to return at a later date if the door is left open.

Have a one-to-one chat with them. They may decide to stay or go, depending on your attitude and suggestions. Find out more information on this on our website under ['leaving or changing a role'](#).

- Have an open and honest conversation to establish why they are looking to leave guiding.
- Ask whether they feel they have had enough support.
- Ask if they want to remain in touch. Someone who is stepping back because of time commitments may still be willing to help on the odd occasion, or get involved with events and so on. They can remain as a unit helper, or a district or division member with no role. Talk them through the full range of roles that are available, looking at their specific skills, motivations and the time they're able to give. There may be something better suited to them than their current role.

Thank the member for their contribution to guiding and let them know that they are welcome to return when they feel they are able. If they are moving house, offer to get the contact details of the local commissioner for the area they are moving to.

Retirement

There is no official retirement age for Girlguiding volunteers. Please visit the main Girlguiding website for the most up to date information about retirement and role reviews, including details of Girlguiding's insurance cover for members of different ages.

Managing finances

As commissioner, you are responsible for managing finances within your area. It is good practice to appoint a treasurer or finance team to look after this side of the district or division, and maintain regular contact to ensure you are up to date with the status of funds.

Money the district or division holds is there to help out - providing equipment, training and resources that everyone can benefit from. How the money is spent can be a joint consultation, but the final decision lies with the commissioner.

Unit accounts

You must ensure that unit financial records are kept accurately and maintained regularly. You should have bank account details for each unit and know who the signatories are.

All unit accounts should be checked annually. You should see an income and expenditure breakdown and explanation for the last 12 months detailed enough for you to understand that finances have been carefully monitored and benefits given to all those who have contributed. It is not necessary to see cheque books or bank statements unless you have concerns.

Some leaders find it difficult to manage their unit finances and sometimes they are reluctant to admit this. It might be helpful to hold an accounts-focused evening to which leaders can bring their paperwork and receive help. Encourage leaders to ask for assistance.

See also *There is a misappropriation of funds*, page 75.

Search for 'finance, insurance and property' on the Girlguiding website.

Gift Aid

Gift Aid is a government scheme to encourage people to give to charity. Under the scheme, money given to charities - including Girlguiding subscriptions - is eligible for tax relief. If units, districts or divisions receive income from tax payers they are strongly encouraged to apply for Gift Aid as it is an easy way to substantially increase funds. Some leaders may need assistance with completing the application form. Direct them to the 'Gift aid' website or go through the form with them. Gift Aid in Scotland works under different arrangements.

For Gift Aid details in Scottish units, contact administrator@girlguiding-scot.org.uk.

Subscriptions

Girlguiding collects an annual subscription from members every year in February. Girlguiding sets its annual subscription in the summer and communicates this to all members at least six months before collection. This is for the year ahead. Countries and regions, counties and local levels of guiding can set additional local levies if required. Depending on your area, you might add a levy that will contribute to your district or division costs. You should discuss this within your district or division team. Review levies annually. Try not to add a levy out of habit if the district or division is not in need of money, or if units would struggle to pay.

Search for 'subscriptions' on the Girlguiding website.

It is your responsibility as commissioner to ensure that everyone in your area pays their subscription on time, and to chase payment where needed. Reports can be run on GO to see who has paid and whose subscription is still outstanding. Any unit subscriptions that are unpaid after the cut-off date are paid by the county, who then chase payment locally.

Certificate of Charitable Status

Sometimes when opening a bank account, leaders are asked for a Certificate of Charitable Status. These can be obtained by emailing certcharitablestatus@girlguiding.org.uk.

Expenses

Do not forget to claim expenses - the role of commissioner will incur some costs, and as with any role in guiding it is important that you do not finance your own resources or expenses. Set your team a good example by claiming yours, and get members in your area to claim theirs so they are not out of pocket. Expenses can include printer ink, postage, stationery, phone calls and petrol.

Thanks and recognition

Girlguiding has a number of awards which may be presented to its members and volunteers. This section covers the awards you will mainly deal with as a district or division commissioner.

Search for 'Awards and Recognition' on the Girlguiding website.

Thanks badge

The Thanks badge (either a brooch or a lapel pin) is given to members and non-members as a sign of appreciation for their support or service to Girlguiding. Any member of Girlguiding may present a Thanks badge after discussion with a leader or commissioner.

Some countries, regions and counties have their own awards. Contact your county commissioner to see what is available.

Complaints

As a commissioner you will mainly deal with complaints that have been escalated, ones that leaders feel unable to deal with, complaints from other volunteers or those from parents who contact you directly.

None of us like to be the subject of a complaint or to respond to complaints but it's really important to deal with every complaint as quickly as possible so that it doesn't become complicated to deal with. An immediate positive response will often prevent a minor complaint escalating. Do not feel that you have to deal with complaints alone, contact HQ or speak to your division or county commissioner.

Girlguiding has a complaints procedure which can be found on the Girlguiding website by searching for 'complaints'.

**Search for
'complaints' on the
Girlguiding website**

When investigating a complaint, you should start by arranging to contact the complainant by telephone or visit to talk about the complaint. Collect all information and any evidence there may be, and obtain a clearer understanding of what happened.

Confirm in writing the complaint(s) made, and conduct further investigation with any other parties involved. Be thorough, and keep notes of everything related to the investigation.

Once the investigation is completed, arrange to meet or contact the complainant to discuss the outcomes of the investigation. Let them know if the complaint has been upheld, and any action that will be taken, as well as any key learning points which may have been identified from the complaint. Follow this up with confirmation in writing. Good practice in to assist you in managing and responding to complaints can be found in the [investigation procedure](#) or by searching for 'complaints' on the Girlguiding website. the HQ compliance team can also help with practical advice on how to investigate a complaint and the website provides details about what a complainant should expect to happen.

Chapter 3

Vision

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Delivering the aims and objectives of Girlguiding at a local level

See also the commissioner section of the Girlguiding website.

A commissioner does more than lead the people in their team and act as a point of contact. She is responsible for developing and promoting guiding within her area as a whole, for both girls and adults. While this may sound

a daunting task, when broken down into smaller parts it becomes very manageable. It also does not have to be done by the commissioner alone - many tasks can be delegated or shared between your team. It can be as simple as holding an event for all the Brownies in your area, or mapping out the area to see where all your units are and where there are opportunities to grow.

See *Appendix 3, Strategic plan template*, page 83.

Building and developing the district or division is a key task for the commissioner. This can involve all sorts of things such as recruitment, role handovers, social events, district or division events for the girls and perhaps some fundraising. Set out a

strategic plan for the coming months and years.

Getting everyone involved can help get ideas flowing, and take the pressure off one person. You can delegate different areas of work to other members of your team, such as membership recruitment, replying to new volunteer enquiries and welcoming new volunteers in the area. See what concerns come up from district or division meetings, and if there is a way to solve them. Turn the subsequent planning meeting into a social meeting; being more relaxed helps creative thinking. Planning together helps build and strengthen your team and is an opportunity to involve new leaders.

Growing the membership

We want as many girls as possible to be able to experience guiding and everything it offers, and effective planning to grow and sustain the membership in your area is key to being able to offer more girls the opportunity to be part of it.

Identifying local needs

See 'Creating a growth plan' on the Girlguiding website.

Understanding your local area and understanding the membership needs in your area are key to successful growth and retention. Different factors can affect guiding in your local area.

- Are there any new housing developments, or any planned in the future?
- What public transport is available and are there plans for this to change? Will new or changed routes affect access to current units, or provide new access for areas without units?
- Are there any new schools, colleges or community provisions (such as youth clubs or activities), or areas with increasing populations?

Consider how your area is currently set up.

- What sections do you have? Are there spaces for girls to join and move up?
- How many leaders and volunteers do the units have? Where are there gaps?
- Where are there long waiting lists?
- What other roles would help to support the existing units or local area team, such as administrators, treasurers or mentors?

Using membership data will help you plan for growth. You can get most data through GO. As commissioner, you'll be able to see reports for your level. A GO statistical summary report or an enquiry report is a really helpful starting point when making your plan for growth.

There are tools for helping you create your growth plan, available on the Girlguiding website. Search 'Creating a growth plan'.

Putting plans into action

Once you've identified the needs of your local area and membership, there are many ways to think about how you're going to address these needs. Get other people in the team to help you cover everything - you don't have to do it alone! And there are tools and resources available to help you do this.

Using recruitment resources

There are lots of free and adaptable resources available to help you shout out about Girlguiding in your local area (see also Promoting guiding on page 71). The Online design centre can be used to create personalised materials such as posters, postcards and banners. Search 'Online design centre' on the Girlguiding website.

See 'Growing our membership' on the Girlguiding website.

You can order non-localised versions of posters and postcards from your local volunteer shop, by contacting the Girlguiding information team or by searching the Girlguiding online shop. These materials are free of charge - plus postage and packaging if anything is posted to you.

There are also different take-away items available that you can order to use in your promotional campaigns, like pens, stickers, notebooks and wallplanners.

Recruiting volunteers and girls

- Run a recruitment drive in your local area - this could involve putting up posters, running a recruitment stall at a local event, advertising roles online, promoting volunteering via social media or a combination of these things! Work together as an area team and give specific roles to different people. Search 'Running a recruitment drive' on the Girlguiding website.

- If you'd like to recruit more girls, consider approaching local schools to see if you are able to visit and run activities to get them interested in guiding. Search 'Recruiting in schools' on the Girlguiding website.
- Get parents involved. Ask leaders to speak to parents about volunteering or starting a parent rota. They might have a specific skill or interest they'd like to share with the girls, and they don't have to volunteer at their daughter's unit if they'd prefer not to. If they're not able to volunteer, ask them to help with recruitment of new volunteers or girls by sharing opportunities in the local area.
- Talk to students. If you're in an area with a large student population, promote volunteer opportunities at freshers fairs or on campus. Link specific skills gained or required for guiding roles with students courses that share the same skills. Make sure roles are flexible and fun!

Welcoming and inducting volunteers

- Give volunteers a warm welcome. Giving volunteers a great experience from their first enquiry to when they start their role is essential in keeping your new volunteers after they've joined. There are a range of tools on the Girlguiding website for supporting a successful volunteer induction, including a checklist for commissioners, and even an editable county induction booklet. Search 'Toolkit for a warm welcome'

Helping girls stay in guiding

- Help girls move up sections. Link up units of different sections to help girls find places to move on to your local area. Show girls how much fun the next section is by holding joint events or planning new units to meet in the same venue as existing ones.
- Make sure their parents know what they're doing. Encourage leaders to keep good communication with parents, telling them what they have planned for the term and what exciting events or trips they have coming up to keep girls coming back.

Welcoming members with additional needs

If an adult or girl with additional needs wishes to join, you will need to work with the leadership team to help them settle in. Girlguiding is an inclusive organisation and we want to ensure that all girls and volunteers receive the same great guiding experience. Some leaders will require additional support in thinking about the programme and how to cater for the new member's needs. Having a conversation between the leaders and the individual or her parent/carers before they join can help to establish their needs and make them feel welcome.

The Girlguiding website contains additional advice and supporting resources, as well as information on the Accessible guiding grant which provides grants to cover some of the additional costs that may be incurred. Find out more about this on our website under '[including all](#)'.

Flexible guiding

Flexible guiding is a general term that describes a number of ways in which leaders throughout the UK have adapted guiding to suit their particular circumstances. Being flexible could be key to growing the membership in your area. Not every unit needs to be run in the same way - one way does not always fit all!

Talking with the girls parents, and volunteers may provide you with reasons why a unit may not be successful. Clashing school clubs, transport issues, an inconvenient location - there may be many reasons why not only girls, but potential volunteers, are not getting involved. Consider being flexible in the following areas.

Flexible meeting times

- Consider changing meeting days if there is the clash of a sports or school club that meets around the same time. Also consider weekends, school holiday guiding or changing the frequency of meetings.
- Think about holding meetings straight after school on the premises - it will mean children don't have extra journeys to and from meetings. It also means that parents have to come out only once, or that they can collect the girls on their way home from work.
- Bear in mind that meetings do not have to be held every week - they can be held fortnightly or monthly, depending on what works for the girls and the leadership team.

Flexible sections

- If numbers are low, consider having multi-section units. Groups can meet together and have enough members to do general games and activities together, then break off for part of the meeting to do section-specific activities. This can also help when you do not have enough leaders.
- If leaders find programme planning a problem, consider using the same programme for more than one unit in the same area. This can help out those who find it difficult, but can also stop girls moving from one unit to the other if they think a different unit has a better programme. Use this only as a temporary measure, otherwise you run the risk of not responding to the needs of the girls. Consider why there is a planning problem and try to address the issue.

Flexible venue

- Lack of girls in the unit may indicate that the unit is not positioned in the best area - just because it has always met there doesn't mean it has to! Has the local residential area shifted? Perhaps there are fewer young families than previously in an area.
- Paying for the local hall can drive up costs - consider holding different units' meetings at the same time in the same building or consecutively. This can also help with families with sisters in two sections.

- Those in remote areas may find it difficult to meet up every week. Some units meet up once a month or term, and send out materials and activities in the post or by email.

Flexible volunteers

- Volunteers don't have to be there every week to be in a leadership role (unit team). Some units have leadership teams that take on a rota for the term, sharing out the meetings and the paperwork.
- There are many more ways people can volunteer without attending meetings - shopping, accounts, preparation of materials for activities, letter writing, making bookings, transport, equipment maintenance, fundraising, catering, photocopying, photographer... the list is endless.
- Try to retain leaders who are unable to make a regular commitment but can help on an occasional basis. They could be an adviser or mentor, or part of a unit leadership team with shared responsibilities.
- Keeping in touch with Rangers or leaders who have moved away to college or university can also be beneficial. They can still stay involved with events and residential events during the holidays, and may come back once they've finished studying.
- Members of the local Trefoil Guild can be a great source of support when you need an occasional pair of hands. They have a lot of experience, and can help you build a network of volunteers that is able to help other units when needed.

Succession planning

Planning for changes in the local team is an ongoing process, and knowing what changes are ahead is an important part of running a district or division. Thinking ahead is key - you should have a fairly good idea of who is going away to university or coming to the end of a fixed-term role, so think about your options early. A year in advance is a good time to start to advertise, 'talent spot', or offer potential training to volunteers and discover someone new for the role.

When a new role is available, consider the following questions.

- Is the role needed? Do you need a separate administrator and secretary or could the roles be amalgamated?
- Does the role need to be done exactly as it was before, or can it have a different focus?
- Could this be an opportunity to review the strengths and weaknesses of the whole team? Would someone in another role be better suited to this one? Might you use the opportunity to look for someone whose skills would balance the rest of the team?
- Do you need someone ready qualified, or can this be an opportunity for leaders in your area to develop?
- Could a role be shared between members?
- Does the role necessarily need a leader to fill it?
Remember that you can look beyond guiding to find individuals who might be interested.

Use the volunteer role descriptions as a guide for which roles would suit different people, search 'Volunteer role descriptions' on the Girlguiding website. Once a person has been identified for a new role, you will need to manage the handover period.

- How long will it take for the new person to get up to speed?
- What do they need to know?
- Can the new role holder shadow the previous role holder for a set amount of time?

Search for 'Promoting guiding' on the Girlguiding website

Promoting guiding

Being active in the community is one of the best ways to promote guiding. This can be done in many ways - through local media (newspapers, radio etc), at local events (a stall at the local fête, taking part in a carnival procession), talks in schools and companies.

Although most counties have a marketing and communications adviser, volunteers will consult you too.

This community activity can be great for recruitment of girls and volunteers, but keeping up awareness when you're not looking to recruit can help with fundraising, 'talent spotting', resource gathering, and raising the profile of guiding.

- Always use up-to-date Girlguiding marketing and recruitment materials.
- Contact your county marketing and communications adviser/ public relations adviser for guidance on generating publicity. They have guidelines and the most up-to-date information for you to use, and check to see that efforts are not being doubled or counter productive. There will be a list of spokespeople who have been trained on how to speak publicly about guiding, who will be able to support you.
- Be enthusiastic and encourage your team to talk positively about guiding - use Girlguiding's [mission statement](#) to generate discussions about guiding and its role in the community.
- Put leaflets and posters out locally in key community places (libraries, surgeries, dental practices, sports halls, nurseries and so on), and make sure supplies are regularly updated, topped up and look smart.
- Keep a list of places, including websites and newsletters, where community information is displayed, so you can make sure the guiding information is up to date.
- When visiting local community venues, take the chance to talk to others about guiding and what it offers to adults as well as girls and young women - the personal approach can be very effective.
- Keep a guiding mug or calendar on your desk at work and tell your colleagues about all the work guiding does.

Search the Girlguiding website for 'Online design centre'.

Chapter 4

What to do if...

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1. You are contacted by leaders who are unable to attend their unit meeting.

You might be given a couple of days’ notice or just hours, but if cover cannot be provided, the responsibility will be on you to make sure parents and girls - and the venue manager - are notified. Using GO, access the emergency contact information for all members of the unit and, if time allows, send an email or telephone. You need to find out the contact information for the venue and again email or telephone to advise the contact. It is recommended that where possible you also arrange to place a notice at the venue should people turn up. You should include your name and contact details in case anyone needs to discuss this action.

2. A leader is absent for a long period without explanation.

Ask as many questions as possible of the person who contacts you with this news, and take their contact details in case you need to speak with them again. You may need to clarify if this volunteer is a missing person or has just cut contact with guiding. You should notify other adults in the unit team and offer them support to be able to carry on with meetings. You should consider if it is appropriate to notify the girls and parents and compose a brief, factual note or email and organise its distribution. Find out if the leader is a signatory on any bank accounts, and if so notify the bank and arrange change of authority. Notify any venue contacts if the leader was the main contact for them. Always give your details so that people involved have some way of getting in touch. Make sure you update the status of their role on GO.

3. There are leaders who fall out.

A unit, district or division team will be made up of volunteers who all bring different skills and expectations. Working together is often challenging and it can be expected that this will not always be harmonious. As commissioner you are tasked with leading these people and encouraging them to get along. As a manager you must remain impartial and set an example on how to accept everyone's contribution and work out compromises when disputes occur. You will need to act as a mediator between those who are not getting along, and to do this you should set a time and place convenient to all parties to openly discuss the issues and work out solutions. You should always have a note taker to document such meetings, and ensure everyone is invited to contribute and actions are agreed at the end. The code of conduct can be used to support these discussions. The notes should be circulated in a timely way and you will need to monitor and check on progress.

4. There are concerns about a young member.

If a leader brings to your attention concerns regarding a young member, you should consult the [safeguarding policy and procedure](#) on the website. There is lots of information there to help determine what action should be taken. For the most up to date guidance on Girlguiding's approach to keeping members safe, please always check the Girlguiding website, email safeguarding@girlguiding.org.uk or call the safeguarding team at Girlguiding for advice and information.

5. There is inappropriate behaviour by a member.

We have a clear code of conduct (see page 23) which adults agree to when taking on membership. Girls learn our Laws and Promise as they undertake our programme. You may be asked to consider if something is inappropriate behaviour, and to do this you should always refer back to these resources and make a considered, objective decision. This can be done only by talking directly to all parties involved and making clear, concise notes that you can share with your commissioner. If you do not

feel able to tackle this issue, ask for help. You can get this from your commissioner or by contacting the compliance team at Girlguiding HQ.

6. There is a death of or serious accident involving a child.

This will be an emotional shock to you and others so you need to stay calm and document the details as you receive them. If this happened while the child was engaged on a guiding activity you must notify your commissioner and the Insurance department at Girlguiding HQ. If the incident takes place outside of office hours, please call Girlguiding's emergency PR line or notify the insurance department on the next working day at Girlguiding HQ.

Depending upon circumstances you should check with the family before passing on this news and find out their wishes and arrangements. Refer to paragraph 9 below for details of how to handle any press enquiries. In the case of a death of a leader, please do not deactivate any roles as this may cause an automatic email. Instead, inform the relevant commissioner, and email Membership systems at Girlguiding HQ with title 'deceased member' to make sure the family doesn't receive any communications from Girlguiding. You might be asked to represent guiding at a funeral and should do this only if you feel comfortable to do so. You will need to offer practical support at the unit to the leaders and other girls who will be upset.

7. There is a death of or serious accident of involving a leader.

This will be an emotional shock to you and others so you need to stay calm and document the details as you receive them. If this happened while the leader was engaged on a guiding activity you must notify your commissioner and the Insurance department at Girlguiding HQ.

Depending upon circumstances you should check with the family before passing on this news and find out their wishes and arrangements. Refer to paragraph 9 below for details of how to handle any press enquiries.

In the case of a death of a leader, please do not deactivate any roles as this may cause an automatic email. Instead, inform the relevant commissioner, County commissioner and email Membership systems at Girlguiding HQ with title 'deceased member'. You might be asked to represent guiding at a funeral and should do this only if you feel comfortable to do so. You will need to offer practical support if the unit cannot continue to meet and should follow the information in paragraph 1 above.

8. You become aware of a member's recent criminal conviction.

You may be told by the member themselves, or you may become aware, that a member has recently received a criminal conviction. You might also be told that the matter is still being investigated. Find out as many details as possible and document these. Inform your commissioner and the compliance team at Girlguiding HQ. Not all convictions will result in a member being restricted or removed from their role in guiding. Sometimes a member will be suspended until the investigation is complete. You will be kept informed and advised of any further action you should take by your commissioner. Refer to paragraph 9 below for details of how to handle any press enquiries.

9. You (or one of the volunteers) are contacted by a member of the press.

In the event of a crisis do not respond to any media enquiries - take the caller's details, say someone will call them back and ring the Press Office where someone will support you. If this takes place out of office hours, please visit the website to find the out-of-office-hours mobile number. This number should be used only to notify the Press Office of issues which could generate negative or major publicity. Act fast and make sure you contact your county or country and region marketing and Communications adviser/PRA who will also be able to provide support.

10. There is property or land owned or leased in your area for guiding.

As commissioner you should be aware of who is on the management committee for the property. You should be included in committee notes and minutes, receive a copy of audited accounts and be aware that risk assessments and legislative practices are being followed.

11. Individuals or units refuse to pay annual subscriptions.

You should refer any member who refuses to pay individual or unit subscriptions to Girlguiding's annual subscription policy detailed online. Failure to comply with this policy means you must refer the matter to your county commissioner who will contact the compliance team. You will be asked to document all that you have done regarding this issue and will need to work with your district or division to support others who will be affected by the removal.

12. There is a misappropriation of funds.

As commissioner it is important that you see all accounts annually and check that there is not too much or too little money being held. As a general rule a unit should have enough money to run for 6 to 12 months without further income. If too much money is being held you should ask the leaders why. If it is for a legitimate purpose - for example, saving for a camp or trip - this is fine. If not, you should draw their attention to the Charity Commission advice that the money held is for the benefit of the members currently participating in guiding.

Refusal of any Unit team to produce accounts goes against Girlguiding policy and you should report this matter to your county commissioner, who will contact the compliance team. If you are made aware that a member has accounted for or used funds personally when they were collected for guiding purposes, this is fraud and should be reported to the county commissioner who will in turn report it to the police. It may be possible for the individual concerned to agree to a repayment plan. This can

be arranged over a period of time and the individual should also have a restriction placed on their role stating that they should not be allowed to handle guiding finances.

13. You receive a solicitor's letter.

You should copy the letter for your own records and forward the letter directly to the Insurance department at Girlguiding HQ within 24 hours. Notify your commissioner and await further instructions. You should not comment or speak to the solicitor without advice.

14. You are asked to supply a reference.

You may be asked to give a reference for a member in your capacity as commissioner. If you are uncomfortable about doing this, refuse. Always be honest and if you are unaware or uncertain about specifics, do not answer these questions.

Appendices

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Appendix 1 Unit visits

A unit visit is a great opportunity to show leaders that you are interested in what they do and that you value them. It is also a chance to meet and get to know the girls. Be aware that some leaders may get flustered when a commissioner visits, so try to make them feel at ease - give lots of positive comments and congratulate them on what they are doing well.

During your visit you can learn a lot from simply watching guiding in action and chatting to the girls. If there is a relaxed and happy atmosphere the girls will be keen to tell you what they are doing. Make sure the unit team know you're there to learn about what they do and offer your support. They shouldn't feel they're being scrutinised or 'inspected'.



The Doing Our Best standards (see p. 83) were developed with volunteers to give leaders and their teams clarity and confidence around what makes good unit guiding. Each standard describes an aspect of good guiding and has a checklist for bringing this to life. You can use the standards as topics for chats and discussions with unit teams, to encourage them to celebrate successes and think about any areas where they might like some extra support.

Every unit is different and it is important to welcome and value this diversity. Keep an open mind when visiting units and ask questions to understand more about what they do and why, rather than jumping to conclusions. Remember to keep any feedback constructive, balance any suggestions for improvement by recognising strengths, and provide examples and reasons for your views.

Appendix 2

Doing Our Best standards

Our checklists for good unit guiding

With the help of our volunteers, we've put together the Doing Our Best standards to give leaders and their teams clarity and confidence around what makes good unit guiding. Each standard describes an aspect of good guiding and has a checklist for bringing this to life.

Please run through each of the standards and think about what you do in your unit. If your answer to a question on the checklist is 'yes', please pat yourself and your team on the back! We want to celebrate and share what goes into great guiding.

If your answer is 'no' or 'not all the time', please think of what you can start doing to change it to a confident 'yes' - and what support you might need. We know every unit is different, and that you and your team will have your own ideas for putting the standards into practice. Using the standards and checklists consistently will help you give every member the best possible guiding experience.

The Doing Our Best standards may also be useful for commissioners, Girlguiding qualified trainers and other volunteers who support unit teams.

Doing Our Best in brief

These three pages summarise what good unit guiding looks like. Search 'Doing our best' on the Girlguiding website, to find checklists to help you put each standard into practice.

The Five Essentials

Working together in small groups

Girls enjoy working with different members of the unit and in different types of groups.

Encouraging self-government and decision making

Girls choose, plan and lead activities - and reflect on what they've experienced and learned.

A balanced and varied programme which is girl-led

Girls develop skills for life through a variety of fun indoor and outdoor activities, residential experiences and social action projects. They achieve badges and awards for their efforts.

Caring for the individual

All girls, volunteers and parents feel valued during their time with the unit and build positive relationships with each other. Whenever members are ready to move on, we help them decide the next steps in their guiding journey.

Sharing a commitment to a common standard

We help girls to understand the meaning of the Promise and the Law, and how they can stay true to these commitments in their daily lives. They choose how and when to make the Promise. Volunteers also live the Promise and Law in everything they do in guiding.

Good safety and safeguarding

Volunteer roles and responsibilities

All volunteers complete the Girlguiding recruitment process for their role and follow the volunteer code of conduct.

Recognising and acting on safeguarding concerns

All unit members understand their role and responsibilities in keeping others safe and follow our policies and procedures. They know what to do if there are concerns about a girl, young woman or adult in Girlguiding.

Managing risk

Leaders complete risk assessments and constantly monitor risks to keep all events and activities as safe as possible.

Preparing for emergencies

Leaders prepare to keep everyone safe in an emergency. This means making sure there's first aid cover and adequate fire precautions - and that all unit team members know what to do if there's an emergency.

Keeping member information safe

Everyone in the unit team understands the importance of data protection and follows Girlguiding requirements for protecting data and keeping information up to date.

Making guiding happen

Encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion

We welcome all girls and young women and give them equal chances to join and participate in our units. We make every volunteer who meets our requirements for their role feel welcome and treat them fairly.

Building a strong unit team

Volunteers make sure they have the knowledge and skills needed for their role, and keep themselves up to date. Everyone in the team is supported to make a positive contribution for girls - and we recognise and celebrate their contributions.

Being part of the guiding family

Unit members are proud to be part of Girlguiding. Leaders keep themselves up to date with guiding news locally, nationally and internationally, work with other units, and help to spread the word about guiding.

Managing your unit's money

Leaders make sure their unit's finances are well managed and keep accurate and up-to-date accounts.

Appendix 3

Strategic plan template

OBJECTIVES	ACTION PLAN	TIMESCALE	OUTCOME
To grow membership in the area	Discuss ways of doing this at next meeting and agree actions.	Within 2 weeks	Increase members - both adults and girls directed to GO.
	Send for recruitment leaflets from the Girlguiding shop.	Now	
	Approach supermarket for a publicity stand.	20 Jan	
	Draft letter to parents (with event consent form).	1 Feb	
	Hold event at supermarket.	22 Feb	

Appendix 4

Additional resources

The following resources will be helpful to you in your role as commissioner.

- The Girlguiding website, www.girlguiding.org.uk, is the main source of guiding information and guiding resources.
- *guiding* magazine is free to all members and contains news, features, information on upcoming events, inserts and regular activity ideas for meetings.
- Girlguiding news is a monthly e-newsletter sent by Girlguiding.
- See also the different resources for Rainbows, Brownies, Guides and Rangers for an overview of the programmes for the different sections.